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Shaw shows appreciation to JWOD employees

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The Shaw community showed its gratitude to many of its contract employees Friday with the 2nd annual Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program Picnic at Pavilion Park.

The JWOD Program began more than 60 years ago employing people who are blind or have other disabilities. There are more than 120 JWOD employees at Shaw working with four companies. Those companies are LC (Lions Club) Industries, Goodwill Industries, the Genesis Center and the Sumter County Disabilities and Special Needs Board.

Representatives from each company were present at the picnic, as well as representatives from the National Institute for the Severely Handicapped and Ret. Brig. Gen. Leon Wilson, Jr., executive director of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. The committee is the independent federal agency that administers the JWOD Program.

Not only was the picnic a time to show appreciation for JWOD employees' work, but also a time to recognize the efforts of individuals from each JWOD company at Shaw.

For example, the Genesis Center, which provides the base librarians and employees who do postal and custodial work, presented Sinok Winters, a library employee, with a plaque for being the service person of the year.

The Sumter County DSNB, which covers ground maintenance, presented Outstanding Employee awards to Eric Blanding, a disabled contractor, and Milton Choice, the non-disabled contractor working with Blanding.

Several commissary shelf-stockers also received appreciation awards from Goodwill Industries.

Unexpectedly, the 20th Fighter Wing and the 20th Contracting Squadron each received the NISH President's Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to the employment of people with severe disabilities through the use of the JWOD program. The President's Award is the highest honor given by NISH.

Col. Donald Hargarten, 20th Fighter Wing vice commander, accepted the President's Award on behalf of the wing. He expressed his feelings on having the JWOD employees working at Shaw.

"Each one of the JWOD employees contributes to the cause for which we are fighting," he said. "The success of this program is wonderful. When people come to Shaw, what they see is the pride we take in where we live and work. Most of what they see is due to these employees."

Even though the picnic was intended to be a time to show Shaw's appreciation to JWOD employees, the employees also wanted to show their appreciation to the Shaw community by providing the food for the event.

"These people take pride in having jobs and being taxpayers," said Maj. John Wilkinson, 20th Contracting Squadron commander. "We are so proud to have them here."